United Nations A/71/225

General Assembly

Distr.: General
28 July 2016

Original: English

Seventy-first session
Item 115 (d) of the provisional agenda*
Elections to fill vacancies in subsidiary organs and other elections: election of fourteen members of the Human Rights Council

Note verbale dated 26 July 2016 from the Permanent Mission of Croatia to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly

I have the honour to recall that the Republic of Croatia has decided to present its candidature to the Human Rights Council for the term 2017-2019, at the elections to be held during the seventy-first session of the General Assembly, in October 2016.

The Government of the Republic of Croatia looks forward to contributing to the work of the Human Rights Council in an efficient, effective and constructive way, guided by a deep adherence to the universality, the indivisibility and the interdependence of all human rights, to fundamental freedoms and the rule of law.

In accordance with General Assembly resolution 60/251, I have the honour to present herewith the voluntary pledges and commitments of the Government of the Republic of Croatia to the promotion and protection of human rights at the national and international levels (see annex).

I should be grateful if the present letter and its annex could be circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under item 115 (d) of the provisional agenda.

* A/71/150.

16-13134 (E) 100816

Please recycle

Annex to the note verbale dated 26 July 2016 from the Permanent Mission of Croatia to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly

Candidature of the Republic of Croatia to the Human Rights Council, 2017-2019

Voluntary pledges and commitments pursuant to General Assembly resolution 60/251

1. The protection and promotion of human rights remains a core commitment and a priority of the Government of the Republic of Croatia. Guided by deep adherence to the universality, indivisibility and interdependence of all human rights, fundamental freedoms and the rule of law, Croatia has presented its candidature to the Human Rights Council for the period 2017-2019, and expresses its determination to further the work of the Human Rights Council in an efficient, effective and constructive way, if elected to serve on the Council for the first time since the Council's creation.

2. Croatia, as a new member of the Human Rights Council, will support good existing practices within the Council and will closely cooperate with other Council members and observers to strengthen confidence between all actors during deliberation of human rights issues. Croatia will promote and encourage respect for human rights, without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion, or on any other grounds. We will promote equality for all people and the elimination of all forms of discrimination.

3. Croatia also remains determined to further develop its institutional and legal framework in the field of promotion and protection of human rights. In this regard, we will continue to improve and implement our national documents in this field, such as the national programme for the protection and promotion of human rights, national policy for gender equality, and the strategy for the promotion and protection of children's rights. We shall also implement United Nations treaty bodies recommendations and fulfil reporting obligations in a timely manner and participate in meaningful dialogue with respective committees. In meeting its international obligations in full protection of human rights, and further harmonizing national legislation with international standards and commitments, Croatia expresses its intention to ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a communications procedure and the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance.

4. Croatia reasserts the importance of the practical implementation of international human rights standards through the implementation of universal periodic review recommendations, resolutions and recommendations by the special procedures of the Council and the United Nations treaty bodies, and recognizes that the role of international standards is crucial for the progressive development of human rights law. Croatia has issued a standing invitation expressing its willingness to receive a visit from any thematic mandate holder.

5. Croatia has undergone two cycles of the universal periodic review, which have been carried out in a constructive and open spirit and debated with all relevant stakeholders, including non-governmental organizations and national human rights

institutions, and which have been considered as important contributions to all national plans and strategies in the area of promotion and protection of human rights. Moreover, our responses have been additionally strengthened through recent consideration of national reports before United Nations treaty bodies (on children; disabilities; torture; and political rights).

6. Based on our own experience, Croatia firmly believes that the implementation of universal periodic review recommendations can be significantly supported following broad cooperation with civil society organizations and parliament committees, and that the implementation of assessments and recommendations made by international human rights bodies, including the universal periodic review, can be further strengthened by translating, publishing and making these available to the general public.

7. Croatia is committed to the fundamental rights of equality and non-discrimination, and is determined to tackle all forms of racial discrimination and xenophobia on the national and international level. To combat inequality, discrimination and acts such as hate crime and hate speech, Croatia has adopted a comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation, which acts as a basis for the effective role of the Ombudsman. Based on its national human rights approach, Croatia is committed to advocate for the dignity of all human beings, cooperate with other United Nations members towards the implementation of the General Assembly resolution on freedom of religion or belief and landmark resolution 16/18 of the Council on combating religious intolerance, intensify efforts for the universal ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination and its Protocol, to which Croatia is also a party, continue to make all acts of hate crime more visible and to hold perpetrators accountable, in line with respecting the fundamental rights of equality and non-discrimination, and remain engaged in sharing good practices in addressing hate crimes.

8. Croatia can serve as an example for multi-institutional cooperation in addressing hate crimes by the establishment of the Working Group for Monitoring Hate Crime Incidents, coordinated by the Government Office for Human Rights and Rights of National Minorities, a central body for the collection and publishing of data on hate crime and monitoring the human rights situation in the country in general.

9. Croatia welcomes the transformative action to mainstream gender equality into all three pillars of the United Nations, peace and security, human rights and development, actively participates in the New York-based Group of Friends of Women, Peace and Security, supports the mandate and the work of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences, and remains actively engaged in the implementation of the women, peace and security agenda of the Security Council. We remain committed to continuous implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) and associated resolutions, especially through our national plan and to direct contribution to United Nations peacekeeping. Adequate representation of female personnel is a crucial element in our efforts to combat sexual violence, promote gender awareness among the host nations' populations and improve relationships between peacekeepers and local citizens. To contribute to this goal, Croatia has organized two United Nations training courses (one in May 2015 and another in April 2016) for female police officers from several countries of Asia and Africa as predeployment preparation for peacekeeping operations. During 2016 Croatia is presiding over the Equal Futures Partnership initiative, thus committing itself to promote in particular women's political

participation and their position in the labour market and is actively contributing to the empowerment of women nationally and internationally.

10. Croatia actively promotes the rights of the child and traditionally supports all resolutions that focus on different aspects of the child's protection, including in armed conflict. Croatia signed the Third Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on communications procedure, supports all human rights resolutions that focus on different aspects of the child's protection, adopted the Paris Commitments and Principles and will further pay attention to the needs of children and their vulnerabilities during and after armed conflict.

11. Croatia is dedicated to multilateral cooperation to ensure the protection of civilians in conflict, considers the full implementation and respect of international humanitarian law as crucial in this regard and will continue to be devoted to addressing the issue of disappearances in conflict, based on our successful cooperation with the International Committee of the Red Cross and the Council's Working Group on Enforced Disappearances. We support the role of the International Criminal Court as indispensable to further protection of civilians in conflict, being among the first countries in the world to ratify the Kampala Amendment to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.

12. Croatia is deeply committed to fostering the rights of refugees and migrants, and upholds the principle of sharing responsibility in order to achieve effective cooperation. In our view, the protection of refugees is both a moral and legal obligation for all Member States, whereby the principles of humanity, the sharing of responsibility and solidarity must be upheld. Croatia aims to ensure that the attention in migration crises is given to vulnerable people, such as children, pregnant women and victims of trafficking in human beings and torture. Croatia will foster and welcome initiatives and discussions on addressing the root causes of migration, and will keep its proactive stance in resolving those causes in partnership with affected States.

13. Croatia advocates the humanitarian aspects of the Convention on Cluster Munitions, which has established high standards for assistance to cluster munitions victims, their socioeconomic reintegration and enhancing local and regional capacities, and had the honour to host its First Review Conference in September 2015 in Dubrovnik. We also actively support the Montreux Document.

14. Croatia presents its resolution on conscientious objection to military service every four years and assembles the like-minded states on this matter.

15. Croatia advocates for a vibrant, independent, open and protected civil society at the United Nations, and at the national level, and recognizes the work of human rights defenders for international peace and security. We acknowledge the advisory capacity of the civil society organizations and institutions in recognizing and remedying human rights violations across the globe.

16. Croatia is committed to invest all of its efforts for better human rights protection and improved work of human rights institutions, if elected to serve on the Human Rights Council in the term 2017-2019. Extending its pledges and commitments, the Republic of Croatia undertakes to:

(a) Continue to actively support the balanced, credible and effective work of the Council and its mechanisms, as it has since its establishment;

(b) Cooperate with the Council and take active part in the promotion of universal respect for all human rights for all persons and its further development;

(c) Strengthen the leadership of the Council to work without selectivity and provide timely and efficient response to gross and systematic human rights violations, and support the development of early-warning mechanisms at the Council to address crisis situations at their inception;

(d) Participate in the elaboration of new human rights standards by its own experience, initiatives and good human rights practice;

(e) Remain engaged in the Council's efforts to provide technical assistance and capacity-building for all countries in need;

(f) Support the system of special procedures and closely cooperate with the thematic procedures to which it has extended a standing invitation;

(g) Support the reform and work of treaty bodies and their cooperation with the Council and its mechanisms;

(h) Remain committed to the universal periodic review in order to preserve its universality and value of its recommendations, at the same time contributing actively to the dialogue with countries under review, as well as engage in enhancing the ability of the Council to address the need of Member States to effectively implement universal periodic review and special procedures' recommendations and resolutions;

(i) Enhance genuine dialogue with all Council Member States with the aim of achieving progress in human rights protection;

(j) Remain dedicated to multilateral cooperation to ensure the protection of civilians in conflict and the full implementation and respect of international humanitarian law;

(k) Remain committed to fostering the rights of refugees and migrants, and uphold the principle of sharing responsibility in order to achieve effective cooperation;

(l) Support mainstreaming of human rights into all aspects of United Nations activities, including the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;

(m) Put a particular focus on the protection of the rights of women and the rights of most vulnerable groups (children, migrants and civilians in armed conflict);

(n) Support gender mainstreaming in the United Nations system, including the role of gender officers in the United Nations peacekeeping missions and peacebuilding activities;

(o) Support the valuable contributions by civil society organizations and national human rights institutions to the work of all United Nations bodies and agencies;

(p) Continue its close cooperation with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights;

(q) Remain fully committed to the request that Member States elected to the Council shall uphold the highest standards in the promotion, the protection and the further development of human rights.